British Waterways

Kennet & Avon Canal
Lock Operations

Summary Report following public consultation

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Appendix 1: Other suggestions made by customers

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Introduction

In April 2008 British Waterways published its proposals for reducing boat licence evasion on the Kennet & Avon Canal. This document provides a summary of the comments made by our customers and how we have revised our plans in the light of the consultation exercise. The proposals were tabled at the National Waterway User and Special Interest Group meeting on 16 April 2008, posted to all boat licence holders on the Kennet & Avon and other interested parties on 21 April 2008 and discussed at the Kennet & Avon User Forum on 11 June 2008. The consultation closed on 21 July 2008.

There were 5 elements to the proposal put forward by British Waterways:

1. Hanham Lock on the western end of the canal is staffed
2. County Lock on the eastern end of the canal, or one close by, is staffed
3. Provision is made for locks along the navigation to be staffed at random times with a requirement to display a valid craft licence in order to pass through the lock.
4. Opening hours at either end of the canal are introduced as follows:
   a. April to October 9am – 6pm
   b. November to March 10am – 3pm
5. Licences will be sold at staffed locks on either end of the canal. Licences will be available here for periods of 6 and 12 months only. Payment will only be accepted by credit or debit card.

1. Number of responses received:

We received 155 responses – 138 by email and 17 by letter. Of these 3 were made by organisations and the remainder by private individuals. British Waterways is very grateful for the time and trouble that its customers have taken to share their views and comments.

2. Comments on the BW proposals:

Although there was almost unanimous support for additional efforts to reduce licence evasion, only 31 responses (20%) expressed approval of all 5 of the proposals put forward.

Many respondents were in favour of some of the proposals put forward and not in favour of others. In very broad terms, 103 respondents were mainly in favour and 41 were mainly against.

The remaining 11 responses expressed no opinion or were about unrelated issues.

The comments made on the proposals put forward is given below:

Proposals 1 & 2: The staffing of locks at either end of the K&A

- Safety of passage

There is considerable concern about boaters arriving at locks which are physically locked. Both locations, Hanham and County, are described as difficult to navigate, with County appearing to present the greater risk.

- Lack of safe moorings

Boaters describe a lack of sufficient safe moorings at both locations. At Hanham, there is no perceived danger of attack or vandalism, but at County Lock this is a frequently expressed fear. Users on the eastern end of the canal suggest that this is an even greater danger at Fobney Lock. Some boaters have indicated that having a presence on the eastern end might help to reduce these risks.

- Why not share with other navigation authorities?

Many respondents recommend that BW works with Bristol Harbour Authority in the west at Netham Lock and with the Environment Agency at Blake's Lock in the east to share facilities, costs and staff. It is suggested that these locks provide safe places for boaters to stop and that licence checks, sales etc. can be handled by one member of staff looking after the interests of both navigation authorities.

- Cost

Some respondents felt manning the locks would be far too costly, would not be self-funding and that exisitng licence payers would end up being burdened with even higher licence fees to finance it.

- Doubts as to effectiveness

Many respondents felt that licence evasion at either end of the canal was a very minor issue and that resources should be targetted on enforcing against the non-moving unlicenced boats already on the canal.

Proposal 3: Random checks at locks along the navigation

- Many people have expressed the view that this will be ineffective as many of the unlicenced boats do not move.

- There is a concern that this will delay and inconvenience licenced boaters.

- Many people are supportive of the idea in principle, but feel that this should be carried out by the Caen Hill lock keepers as part of their normal duties.

- Concern has been expressed about what action BW staff are expected to take if people cannot or will not pay. There are many locks where people are unable to turn around or wait without inhibiting legitimate use of the lock landing by licenced boats.

- Some people felt that this policy would encourage unlicenced boats to remain in one, lock-free area, even longer than they do at present.

Proposal 4: Suggested opening hours at Hanham and County Locks

- No responses recommended shorter opening hours, but a small number did express a fear that if opening hours were introduced there might be a temptation in future to reduce them further to save money.

- Suggested opening times ranged from 6am to 10pm. A number of people suggested that we align the opening times with Netham and Blake's Locks.

- Many people strongly expressed the view that restricting use of these locks would be unacceptable as it was punishing the licenced to try to manage the unlicenced.

- It was suggested that a reduction in opening hours might be detrimental to any future attempt by BW to get the Kennet & Avon designation upgraded to 'Cruiseway'.

- One respondent suggested that any restriction of the navigation would give the Kennet & Avon a reputation as an unwelcoming waterway and deter visitors.

Proposal 5: Restrict the licences sold to 6 and 12 month licences only and take payment by only credit or debit card

- The majority of respondents did not comment on this proposal.

- Some respondents felt that it was unfair and requested that short term licences also be made available.

- Some respondents felt the payment method was very unhelpful as some unlicenced craft owners do not have bank accounts and it would be much better if people could pay in cash or with cheques if necessary.

- Some people felt it was a good idea.

3. Other suggestions made by customers

There were a great number of alternative suggestions put forward. Many of these have been recorded in **Appendix 1** together with a brief response to each point made.

4. Conclusions

Having considered the feedback carefully, we have decided the following:

- **Manning and locking of Hanham and County Locks**

  As a result of this consultation exercise we will not be manning Hanham or County Locks or introducing opening hours.

  We will use our best efforts to reach agreement to work in partnership with Bristol Harbour Authority and the Environment Agency to operate a shared service from Netham Lock and Blake's Lock with effect from Easter 2009. It should be noted that British Waterways has no legal power to prevent passage through either of these Locks by unlicenced craft.

We will complement this approach with random licence checks carried out at Hanham and County Locks on craft entering the K&A. On days when these checks are being undertaken, a policy of 'no licence, no passage' will be in place. There will be no need to offer any licences for sale during these checks as all boats will by definition have just come from a Lock where they have had this opportunity. Boats who chose not to purchase a licence will have to return to the previous lock to purchase a licence if they wish to continue their journey.

- **Random manning of locks along the navigation**

We support the suggestion made of using Caen Hill and other key sites as suitable locations for random licence checks.

The staff carrying out these checks will be able to sell licences 'on the spot', provided that customers have their Boat Safety Certificates and Insurance details with them. Unlicensed boats that are not able to provide the necessary paperwork or payment to enable licensing to take place will be served with a formal enforcement notice.

We will only offer 6 and 12 month licences as genuine short term visitors to the canal are likely to have entered via either Netham or Blake's locks where they will have had the opportunity to purchase a short term licence. Purchases will be by card only. Payments by cheque are not cost-effective to administer. British Waterways will continue to offer a range of payment options to customers who want to spread the cost of payments and buy their licences in advance of using the waterway.

We will target this activity to areas where it is already known that there are high levels of licence evasion.

- **Opening hours at Hanham and County**

In the light of our decision not to lock Hanham and County locks there is no need for any further consideration of opening hours.

- **Length of licence and method of payment**

We have noted the comments with regard to the length of licence and will try to offer a range of licences at both Netham and Blake's Locks. We will be guided by the systems already in place at these locks with regard to payment method. Where licence sales are conducted by British Waterways staff at random points along the canal, card payments will be the only option and only 6 and 12 month licences will be available. We will continue to offer a range of payment options to customers buying their licences in advance of using the waterway.

5. Revised plan at a glance:

Proposal number	Summary of original proposal	Result of consultation
1	Hanham Lock is staffed	This proposal will not be implemented
2	County Lock is staffed	This proposal will not be implemented
3	Random staffing of locks along the navigation	This proposal will be implemented, with BW staff selling 6 and 12 month licences which can be paid for by card only
4	Opening hours at Hanham and County Locks	No longer relevant
5	Licences available at either end of the canal	BW hopes to be able to implement this proposal by working in partnership with adjacent navigation authorities at Netham and Blake's Locks, with a range of licences on sale

The views expressed have been invaluable in assisting us to revise our initial proposals. We hope that this revised plan will enable our licenced customers to continue to enjoy as much freedom as possible whilst enabling us to convert our non-paying boaters into regular licence holders.

1 September 2008

John Ward

Acting General Manager